The Project Approach at the Dolores Doré Eccles Center for Early Care and Education

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Some people walk in the rain, others just get wet.
-Roger Miller

The Dolores Doré Eccles Center for Early Care and Education (DDE Center) is moving toward implementing a project-based approach throughout our center. Children have the time, energy, and desire to engage in open-ended exploration. They want to understand weather, machines, and animals. They want to learn where rain comes from and why there is less rain in the desert than in other areas. The Project Approach uses meaningful, complex topics from children’s lives that they are curious about. Children generate questions about the topic and then engage in hands-on exploration, problem-solving, cooperation, and communication to answer their questions.

The DDE Center has been using the foundations of Creative Curriculum® and various components of the Project Approach for years. However, we will start implementing the project-based component of the Creative Curriculum®, referred to as studies, beginning in spring semester 2019. We believe implementing these studies as an entire center will help us to improve our ability to:

- Address the whole child as children explore science and social study topics through math, language, literacy and art.
- Allow children to use their skills in real-life contexts.
- Provide opportunities for higher-level thinking.
- Experiment with different types of strategies to solve problems and generate answers to their questions.
- Encourage children to work collaboratively and address conflicts that might arise.
- Involves families.

As a research and training center, we will be evaluating our use of these studies to determine if all of our teachers (i.e. lead teachers, assistant teachers, practicum students) will be able to implement the studies with fidelity. We will also be looking to see if the addition of the studies contributes to increases in teachers’ use of strategies to promote children’s analysis and reasoning, creativity, ability to make connections to the real world, and advanced language.